

INFANT & TODDLER ORAL HEALTH: FLUORIDE

What is fluoride?

- Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral. It is present in water at varying levels.

Why is fluoride important for my child's teeth?

- Fluoride helps prevent tooth decay from forming on teeth and can even reverse some signs of early tooth decay.
- Regular use of fluoride helps make teeth stronger and more resistant to tooth decay.
- Fluoride is recognized as one of the most effective means of preventing tooth decay for both children and adults. It is a low-cost and safe method for preventing tooth decay.

How does my child get fluoride?

- Fluoride is added to toothpaste and, in many communities, to the water supply.
- The tap water your child drinks may contain fluoride to help protect teeth.
- If you have well water, or if your community water system does not have fluoride, ask your child's dentist or pediatrician about fluoride supplements. If you have well water, arrange to have your water tested for naturally occurring fluoride. If your child's dentist or pediatrician thinks that your child would benefit from fluoride supplements, he or she will prescribe one of the supplement forms listed below for your child. Fluoride supplements are available in a variety of forms:
 - tablets
 - drops
 - lozenges.

How do I choose a toothpaste for my child?

- Select a toothpaste that says it contains fluoride on the tube.
- Only use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste when brushing your child's teeth.
- Make sure your child does not swallow the toothpaste. If your child is unable to spit the toothpaste out, do not use toothpaste until your child is able to do so.

BRUSHING TIPS FOR CHILDREN

Always use a soft-bristled, child or infant toothbrush.

Replace your child's toothbrush every three months.

Never allow your child to share toothbrushes, it spreads germs.

How to Brush Your Child's Teeth

- Place the toothbrush against the gum line at a 45-degree angle. Use a small circular motion to brush your child's teeth and gums.



- Brush back and forth on the chewing surfaces of your child's teeth holding the brush flat.



- Brush the back of your child's teeth.
- Brush your child's teeth after each feeding or at least two times a day. Be sure to brush at bedtime to remove bacteria that can cause decay while your child is sleeping.



CHECKLIST

Find out if the tap water in your neighborhood has fluoride.

Ask your child's dentist or pediatrician if fluoride supplements are right for your child.

FLOSSING TIPS FOR CHILDREN

Flossing cleans between the teeth where a toothbrush can't reach.

You can begin flossing your child's teeth as soon as any two teeth touch.

How to Floss Your Child's Teeth

- Wrap about 18 inches of floss around the middle fingers. Gently slide the floss between the teeth (don't snap the floss into the gums).



- As the floss reaches the gum line, make a C-shape around the tooth until you feel pressure against your child's tooth.



- Gently scrape the tooth surface with the floss.



- Move the floss as it becomes soiled and repeat the process for each tooth.



Martin O'Malley, Governor
Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor
John M. Colmers, Secretary

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Family Health Administration
Office of Oral Health
201 West Preston Street, 3rd Floor
Baltimore, MD 21201
410-767-5300

www.fha.state.md.us/oralhealth
e-mail: oralhealth@dhmh.state.md.us



The services and facilities of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) are operated on a non-discriminatory basis. This policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, or national origin and applies to the provisions of employment and granting of advantages, privileges, and accommodations.

The Department, in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act, ensures that qualified individuals with disabilities are given an opportunity to participate in and benefit from DHMH services, programs, benefits, and employment opportunities.